

The Counseling Connection

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Dear DRMS Parents & Guardians,

I hope that the first few weeks of school have been a great experience for your child! I know this is a big transition for those that were all virtual last year, so the focus of this month's newsletter will be about social anxiety and fitting back into the school environment after a year away. For some, this has

been very difficult and here at Dan River Middle School we offer a lot of resources and support that can help ease your child back into a routine.



***"We rise
by lifting
others."***

Check-in/Check-out

At DRMS we provide a mentoring service that pairs adults with students in need of behavioral and/or academic support. This program allows for students to build relationships and improve their overall middle school experience. The pro-

gram is incentive-based where students earn rewards for meeting their goals. We host a party at the end of the year for all of our Check-in/Check-out (CICO) graduates and invite parents and guardians to come

as well. If you think your child would benefit from this level of support, please do not hesitate to contact the school.

Working Through Social Anxiety

What is social anxiety? Social anxiety is a chronic condition in which social interactions cause irrational anxiety. For over a year our country was in turmoil and we were told to socially distance ourselves from others. Over time, that became a habit and our new norm, which meant that most adolescents became comforta-

ble with being alone and interacting with small groups of people. Now that we are all back together it is a big adjustment and shock for some to be around this many people again. Below I will outline some simple steps to help your child transition back into school.



Positive Self-Talk WORKS!

Students battling social anxiety are often overwhelmed with negative thoughts that reinforce their anxious thoughts. One of the simplest tricks is to teach your child to talk kindly to themselves. Children dealing with anxiety often go to the worst case scenario every time and if they can train themselves to think positively it can make the biggest difference. Think about what your child struggles with and begin

teaching him or her to talk differently about the situation. Maybe you have a child that doesn't want to go to school and getting them to school is a struggle. Instead of engaging with him or her about why they don't want to go, start having them say things like, "I will go to school. I will enjoy it. I will have a great day." At first it will feel silly, but after it becomes routine you will see a positive shift.

"Every moment is a fresh beginning."

T.S. Elliott

Take Control!

Your child has an opportunity to take back control that the anxiety has taken over. These are a couple of tips to help defeat anxiety:

- ◇ Take deep breaths
- ◇ Take a time out
- ◇ Set small, attainable goals
- ◇ Draw
- ◇ Write a letter or a story
- ◇ Identify your emotions
- ◇ Write a thank you note
- ◇ List your positive qualities
- ◇ Make a list of things you can see or touch



Fight, Flight, or Freeze

There are three reactions students have when they are dealing with anxiety and it is beneficial to know which is your child.

Fight– easily agitated and irritated and will engage in arguments in moments of stress.

Flight– withdrawn, gives up easily, refusal to do something/speak

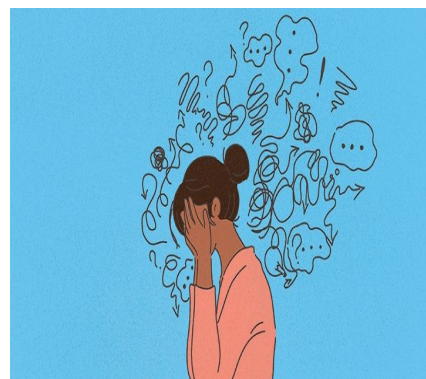
Freeze– “checked out”, excessive screen time, picks up an unhealthy habit



Identifying Triggers

Certain situations trigger an anxiety or panic attack. Typically, people that battle with anxiety know what causes the anxiety. Talk to your child about what typically happens before they have an anxiety attack. If they are unsure, have them start tracking when they feel the most anxious to identify what exactly causes it. Once they can

do that, then they can begin to be prepared. One of the scariest feelings about anxiety is feeling out of control. Being prepared allows the child to be in control.



Have a Plan

If being prepared allows for students to be in control, then they need to create a plan. Have your child write out what causes their anxiety, what they can do to cope with their anxiety when it hap-

pens, and three people they can talk to in an emergency situation. Knowing there is a plan in place gives the child the confidence needed to battle anxiety.





Questions?

Please reach out if you have any questions or would like more information about the support we offer here at Dan River Middle School to ensure success for all students.

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Middle School Parenting Tip #2

Establish the “Three W Rule”. Whenever your child is going somewhere make it a habit that they have to tell you where they are going, who they are going with, & when they will be back home. Knowing what your adolescent is doing when they are not under your roof is for their safety and your sanity.

